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WHAT DOES
RICHARD WAGNER
RELATE CONCERNING THE ORIGIN
OF HIS MUSICAL COMPOSITION OF
**THE RING
OF THE NIBELUNGS?**

BY
S. RÖCKL

TRANSLATED BY C. DE C. PARRISH



BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL
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RICHARD WAGNER
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COMPILED
FROM EPISTOLARY UTTERANCES OF THE MASTER
BY
S. RÖCKL

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
BY
CONSTANCE DE C. PARRISH



LONDON, BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL
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FRANKFURT
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This pamphlet forms the continuation to that issued by the same publishers:
"What does Richard Wagner relate concerning the origin of his Nibelungen Poem, and how does he interpret it?"

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WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK, Zurich, June 11, 1853.

"Everything depends upon my first thoroughly bracing myself, in order — after a pause from musical composition of almost five years — to obtain the requisite youthful courage to set about my new gigantic task with pleasure and cheerfulness. I must close quite a long chapter of life behind me to commence a new, important one; for that I require new life-impressions. I need a certain satiation from without, in order to be forced afterwards, by means of a fine reaction, to throw my heart joyfully outwards again. Thus I must be quite untrammelled, able to travel, enjoy Italy, perhaps even to visit Paris again, in order to attain afterwards that pleasant tranquillity, which I am lacking just at present."

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK, Zurich, July 13, 1853.

"Tomorrow morning I start for St. Moritz¹; if the cure² be accomplished successfully, I go on to Italy. Well-ruled paper for sketches is on hand, and before the end of this year the composition of the Rheingold will, I think, be entirely sketched. To my most delighted astonishment, Liszt met me half way with my own plan for the future performance of my Stage Festival Play; we have arranged that it shall take place from the spring till the autumn of one year, at Zurich; a provisional theatre shall be built for the purpose, and what I need in the way of singers etc. shall be expressly engaged for

1) Grisons.

2) Course of waters.

it. Liszt will go to the four quarters of the globe and collect subscriptions from everywhere for the undertaking, and he is confident of raising the necessary money for it. You see that we have arranged no mere trifle between us."

Wagner remained in St. Moritz with Herwegh the poet until the middle of August, and then returned to Zurich, in order to start, ten days later, on the evening of the 24 of August, for his trip to Italy. He went by way of Berne to Turin, from there to Genoa and Spezzia.

"Whether it be a demon or a genius which often governs us in decisive moments — enough: while stretched out sleepless in an inn¹, the inspiration of my music for the 'Rheingold' seized me²."

WAGNER to LISZT, September 12, 1853.

"Then I turned back — in order to snuff out, or else — to compose. So here I am in Zurich again — unwell, depressed — ready to die."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, September 29, 1853.

"As to the rest, I now have a great longing to at length get to work; my every-day life is to be borne in no other way than by devouring myself. Besides, at present I can keep silent in no other way — which I especially desire to do, — than by completing this very music."

On the 6 of October Wagner met Liszt and some of his pupils in Basle. From there they went all together to Strassburg, where the friends branched off in different

1) In Spezzia. (C. de C. P.)

2) *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. IX, Page 344.

directions. Wagner continued the journey to Paris with Liszt. Whilst the latter already returned to Weimar at the end of a week, Wagner remained in his circle of intimate colleagues till the end of October. Two days after his return to Zurich he wrote to Liszt:

"Today, already, the 'Rheingold' was flowing through my veins, therefore if it must be, and cannot be otherwise, you will receive a work, which ought to give you joy(?)."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, November 16, 1853.

"I now feel so happy and cheerful at my work, that I dare hope for everything — not only for the success of the music itself, but also for my recovery — as soon as I can remain absolutely undisturbed at it, and abandon myself with an easy mind to my glorious mood. If I had to get up some morning without being able to set about my music, I should be miserable."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, December 17, 1853.

"I am spinning myself in, like a cocoon, but I am also spinning out of myself. For five years I have written no music. At present I am in 'Nibelheim': today Mime bemoaned his lot. Unfortunately another severe feverish cold seized me last month and made me unfit for work for ten days, otherwise I should have been bound to finish the sketch this year. Often, too, my somewhat nebulous condition deprives me of my mood: at present there is a provoking lull within me. But I must finish by the end of January."

WAGNER to LISZT, January 15, 1854.

"The 'Rheingold' is finished, — but I, too, am finished!!! — Of late, I necessarily and purposely so stunned myself with my work, that I even stifled every impulse

to write to you before its completion. Art is, for me, in reality, purely a stop-gap, nothing else! But, indeed, it is becoming the real stop-gap over and over again: Necessity compels me to stop the gap by its means, for bare subsistence. Yet really it is only from sheer desperation that I always take up Art again; if this is to occur, and I am to again abandon Reality, — if I must needs again throw myself into the waves of artistic fancy in order to content myself in an imaginary world, then at least my fancy must be helped, my imagination must be sustained. In that case I cannot live like a dog, I cannot sleep on straw and revive on bad whisky, I must feel soothed in some way or another, if my mind is to succeed in the murderously difficult task of forming a non-existent world.

Well! when, lately, I conceived the plan of the *Nibelungen* and its actual execution afresh, much had to be effected to give me the necessary epicurean art-mood: I had to be enabled to lead an ameliorated existence . . . I fitted up my home anew, was extravagant (Good Heavens — Extravagance!!) in this and that requirement of luxury . . . In that artificially comfortable mood, I now again took delight in music . . . With what faith, with what joy did I set about the music! With a real frenzy of despair I finally continued and finished it; oh! and how the need of money encompassed me! Believe me, the like has never been composed before: it seems to me my music is tremendous; it is a pool of terrors and sublimities."

WAGNER to HEINE, Zurich, January 19, 1854.

"The beginning of November I began to compose the 'Rheingold'; I was so enthusiastic about it, that I had neither ears nor eyes for anything before the conclusion."

WAGNER to LISZT, January ?, 1854.

"This work¹ — is truly the *only thing* which still makes me cling with desire, to life. When I think of sacrifices and crave sacrifices, it is only for this work; for therein only do I still perceive an object for this life of mine. — For its sake I must bear it, and moreover here, where I have established myself and settled down to work. If I think it over properly, my whole proposed action can only be relative to making it possible for me to hold out till the completion of my work . . . With this raging anxiety my nervous complaint has also returned violently; during my work I often felt quite well . . . I was usually silent from inward joy — even Hope softly encircled my heart — already the children in the fable were approaching the weeping nixie and calling out to him: 'Weep not; thou also may'st yet be happy'."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, February 7, 1854.

"I am working out the score of the 'Rheingold' with orchestration, right away; I could devise no way of clearly setting down the Prelude (The Depths of the Rhine) in sketch, so I fell upon the full score at once. Now I shall be that much longer in finishing; my head, also, feels somewhat muddled."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, March 4, 1854.

"Think of it — the whole orchestral Introduction to the 'Rheingold' is written on the single triad of E flat . . . I am working hard. Can you not procure me a person who would be qualified to compile a clear score from my wild pencil sketches? I am working this time quite differ-

1) The Nibelungen Ring.

Röckl, R. Wagner's Nibelungen-poem

ently from formerly. But the clean copy is killing me; I am losing time over it, which I could better employ, and furthermore, so much writing exhausts me to such an extent that it makes me ill and takes away my humour for real work. Without such an expert I am lost; with him I should finish it all in two years. I should be obliged to have the man for that time; if a pause should occur in the scoring, he could meanwhile always transcribe the parts. Do look round! There is no one here. — It certainly sounds somewhat fabulous that I — who can barely keep myself — should want to keep a secretary!"

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, April 9, 1854.

"The orchestration of the 'Rheingold' is progressing: now I have descended with the orchestra to Nibelheim. The whole will be finished in May — but not a clean copy; everything illegible in pencil on single sheets. You will not be able to see it yet awhile. In June the 'Walküre' must be commenced."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, May 2, 1854.

"I shall, after all, have to do the clean copy of my scores myself; it is much too difficult to finish them according to *my* idea, especially as the sketches are often so abominably confused, that only I could make head or tail of them."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, June 7, 1854.

"I must still let the clean copy of the 'Rheingold' score wait. First of all, the 'Walküre' is to be commenced."

WAGNER to LISZT, June, 1854.

"Do not look out for a copyist for me: Madame Wesendonck has presented me with a gold pen of in-

destructible writing power, which is turning me into a calligraphic pedant again. The scores will be my most perfect masterpiece in penmanship! One cannot escape one's fate! Meyerbeer formerly admired nothing so much in my scores as the neat writing; this act of admiration has now become my curse: — I *must* write neat scores as long as I live upon earth! — . . . But now the 'Rheingold' will only be advanced in leisure hours and long winter evenings, for at present I cannot dally over it, — now the composition of the 'Walküre', which I feel gloriously in every limb, must be commenced."

WAGNER to LISZT, July 4, 1854.

"The 'Walküre' is begun: sirrah, the fun^o is now but just commencing! — How strange these contrasts, between the first love scene in the 'Walküre', and that in the 'Rheingold'!"

WAGNER to LISZT, Brunnen, July 31, 1854.

"If all go well, I shall, from August 1, again proceed with the composition of the 'Walküre'; work, *this* work, is the *only* thing which enables me to endure life. I am incidentally proceeding with the clean copy of the 'Rheingold'; by the late autumn you should, I think, have the score at your disposal."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, September 29, 1854.

"You will, in a few days, receive the score of the 'Rheingold' from H.¹, which I sent him piecemeal for the purpose of making a copy in Dresden."

1) Ferdinand Heine.

WAGNER to LISZT, October, 1854.

"Have you the 'Rheingold' yet? I am in the second act of the 'Walküre': Wotan and Fricka: you will see, that must succeed."

WAGNER to LISZT, December, 1854.

"In addition to the slow progress of my music, I have now been exclusively occupying myself with a person, who, even though only in a literary form, has come to me in my solitude like a gift from heaven. This is *Arthur Schopenhauer* . . . His fundamental idea, the ultimate negation of the Will to Life, is of terrible gravity, but solely redemptive . . .

For the sake of the most beautiful of my life's dreams, young Siegfried, I suppose I must finish the Nibelungen pieces; the 'Walküre' has strained me too much to let me begrudge myself this diversion; I am in the second half of the last act of it. I shall not have completed the whole till 1856. — In 1858, in the tenth year of my Hegira, I can then perform it, — if that is to be. As, however, in life, I have never really enjoyed the true happiness of Love, I want to erect a monument to this most beautiful of all dreams, in which, for once, this Love will be thoroughly satiated from beginning to end: I have sketched a Tristan and Isolde in my mind, the simplest, but the most full-blooded musical conception; with the black flag, which flutters at the end, I shall then drape myself, in order — to die."

WAGNER to LISZT, December ?, 1854.

"Brünnhilde sleeps! — I, alas! — am still awake."

WAGNER to FISCHER, Zurich, January 21, 1855.

"I am already orchestrating the 'Walküre'."

WAGNER to LISZT, Beginning of February, 1855.

"The score of the first act of the 'Walküre' will soon be finished: it is excessively beautiful; I have never even approximated anything like it before."

WAGNER to RÖCKL, February. 5, 1855.

"I am setting off the end of this month¹: the first concert is on the 12 of March, the last on the 25 of June. I intend to be back again the beginning of July, and what is more, at the Seelisberg on Lake Lucerne, my favourite spot in Switzerland; there I expect to recover from the London smoke and to compose 'Young Siegfried'. I have now finished the composition of the 'Walküre' — amid great inward suffering, of which no one knows anything, least of all my good wife . . . The orchestration of it I shall complete in London."

WAGNER to FISCHER, Zurich, March 2, 1855.

"Let me first tell you again how matters stand with the score of the 'Rheingold'. Several years ago I promised my young friend² he might do the piano arrangement. As I followed a new method with the orchestration this time, whereby I did not first write a comprehensive, elaborate sketch of the composition, I stood in need of an arrangement from which I could play, and I therefore asked my friend to begin the piano arrangement while I was still writing the score, hence I always sent him the finished parts in separate instalments."

1) For London, to conduct several concerts of the Philharmonic Society there.

2) Klindworth.

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK, London, April 5, 1855.

"I have almost entirely forgotten my composition¹, and often had to think for a long time, of how I had intended this and that to be in it; I have entirely lost the inner memory for it here. The day before yesterday I got the first act finished with great difficulty, and already I am contenting myself with the hope of completing at least the second act here as well; the third, however, I shall have to reserve for the Seelisberg, where I shall unfortunately not be able to commence 'Young Siegfried'; I shall be lucky if I can refind my work there at all, and regain courage for 'Young Siegfried'. Believe me, I ought not to have gone to London! But that is what one gets, *quand on n'a pas l'esprit de son âge* — as you hinted to me."

WAGNER to LISZT, August ?, 1855.

"I certainly wished to place as much of the 'Walküre' before you as possible, and chiefly on that account did the postponement of your otherwise much desired visit suit me. But as matters now stand with me, I have little hope that by gaining time, I shall also gain in work. My mental discord is indescribable; I often gaze for days at the music-paper and can find no recollection, no memory, no thought for my work any more; whence is my inclination to spring? All the motives for it, which I was enabled to derive, for a time, from my painful solitude, must, however, ultimately lose in power. When I began, and rapidly finished the 'Rheingold', I was still full of being together with you and yours. Now for nearly two years everything about me has become silent and all my connections with the outer world are merely discordant

1) The 'Walküre'.

and disquieting. — Believe me, this cannot go on much longer: if my outward lot does not soon take another turn, if I do not soon acquire the possibility of seeing you more frequently and of hearing or producing one of my works from time to time — then the spring within me must dry up and there will be an end to it. It is impossible to continue like this! . . . The 'Walküre' is now, after much difficulty, half finished — even in the clean copy."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, September 13, 1855.

"The completion of the 'Walküre' (of the most tragic work which I have ever conceived) will cost me dear, and I must then be mindful of recovering, by exalted impressions, what I shall have lost."

WAGNER to LISZT, October 3, 1855.

"Today I am sending you the first two acts of the 'Walküre' finished; it is, at the same time, a profound satisfaction to me to know they are in your hands, because I know that no one sympathizes with my labours as much as you. I am anxious about the significant second act: it contains two such important and violent catastrophes, that this substance were really enough for two acts, yet both are so interdependent, and the one so directly involves the other, that a separation here proved quite impossible. If, sometime, it be produced just as I wish, and if my every intention be completely understood, it must certainly engender emotion such as has never been equalled. Such like has been written only for those who can stand something (really for no one!): that dullards and weaklings will complain, cannot influence me in any way. But you must decide whether everything has succeeded

according to my intentions; I cannot alter it, anyhow. In discouraged, dreary moments I was chiefly apprehensive about Wotan's great scene, and especially about the revelation of his destiny to Brünnhilde, nay, in London I once even went so far as to wish to reject the scene entirely; by way of deciding about it, I took up the sketch again, and played the scene to myself with all the required expression; fortunately I found thereby that my spleen was unjustified, and, on the contrary, that a proper performance even produces a truly musical and attractive effect. The mode of expression I have, in some places, indicated very accurately, yet a great deal remains, and it will one day become one of my chief tasks to initiate a talented singer and artist into the very core of my intentions, by means of personal intercourse. You — I confidently hope this — will at once hit the mark. It is the most important scene for the development of the whole great tetralogy, and as such, it will probably soon meet with the requisite interest and attention."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, January 18, 1856.

"I have something to put before you. — I wrote to you recently, that I had at last hunted up a good and intelligent copyist here, for my musical manuscripts. I gave him, first of all, Klindworth's piano arrangement of the 'Walküre'; he brought me the first act capitally written, but — his charge for the time employed (which, however, I considered cheap) appeared to me so high and dear, that I cannot afford expenses of that kind out of my annuity. — I thought over what was to be done, and found that, if I really still proceed with my compositions, I shall have occupation for a musical copyist for just three years, viz: for the copy of the scores, of the piano arrangements, and

of all the vocal and orchestral parts. Should, sometime, the undertaking of the performance be accomplished in any way, then the triennial salary of a copyist could be added very well to the future expenses, and it were only a question whether one could already find a small ring of shareholders who would advance this necessary money. I should have to engage my copyist straightway for three years and pay him an annual salary of eight hundred francs. My only hesitation in this would be that I should have to pledge myself to deliver the compositions in this space of time, nevertheless, as soon as I should see the impossibility of continuing, I could at any time easily give notice to both sides, but my copyist would have plenty to do for one year, and what he had written would, in this event, be handed over to the shareholders in compensation. I should think that would be fair?"

WAGNER to FERDINAND PRÄGER¹,

Zürich, March 28, 1856.

"I have once more been confined to my bed; and when I at length recovered, I had a perfect mania to finally finish the score of my 'Walküre', in the completion of which I have now been prevented for nearly a year² . . .

If you read the poem of the 'Walküre' through again sometime, you will find that such an extreme of sorrow, pain and despair is expressed in it, that the music of it was necessarily bound to strain me terribly: I could not accomplish anything analogous again; when it is finished, a great deal, as a work of art, will appear quite different,

¹) A London friend.

²) According to the entry in the score, Wagner completed the 'Walküre' on the 23rd of March, 1856.

and will be able to give pleasure, even where literally it was only generated by pure despair."

WAGNER to LISZT, April ?, 1856.

"The copy of the 'Rheingold' is already quite finished; I am expecting it back from London shortly, with Klindworth's arrangement of it; this could then be at your disposal for the present. Of the piano arrangement of the 'Walküre', the first two acts will be finished within a few days; the third act I only recently forwarded to Klindworth for manipulation. Hoping that you will accede to my counter offer, I shall now let the copy of the score of the 'Walküre' be commenced also, which you can likewise receive immediately upon its completion, as Klindworth is working from the orchestral sketches. — But if you have any leisure just now, and inclination for its perusal, I will again hand you over the original score of the now quite finished (!) work for a while, with a thousand welcomes, and shall employ the copyist solely with the expected piano arrangement of the 'Rheingold'. Indeed, I am now awfully anxious to know how you like the last act, for I have nobody but you to whom I could exactly impart it with success. It has turned out well, probably the best thing which I have composed. A fearful storm — of the elements and of the souls, which gradually becomes hushed to Brünnhilde's magic sleep."

WAGNER to FISCHER, Zurich, April 29, 1856.

"At length the 'Walküre' is finished: it has turned out extraordinarily beautiful. The first act I recently performed once at my house; I sang the 'Siegmund' and the 'Hunding', and Frau Heine, a fine amateur, the 'Sieglinde'; a friend accompanied."

WAGNER to RÖCKL, August 23, 1856.

"The expedition to London was a foolish inconsistency of mine, for which I endured every punishment with resignation, more especially that of perseverance, till my engagement was at an end. All the mind for my work melted away there; I wanted to complete the score of the 'Walküre' while there, but lost all the inner memory for it, returned to Zurich ill, completed the 'Walküre' laboriously in the course of the winter (but — between ourselves, beautifully) midst continual relapses of erysipelas, and went the beginning of this summer to the neighbourhood of Geneva, where, under the care of an excellent doctor, I went through a very successful course of waters, from which I have just returned here, where I found your letter. Commencing the composition of 'Young Siegfried' could not then be thought of. The end of September Liszt will visit me; I shall go over both my finished scores with him; then, refreshed and stimulated, I hope to set about 'Siegfried' in order to bring it into the world finished next year. There! you have all my news.

After much trouble and difficulty, I received, last year in London, another copy of the 'Rheingold' made in Dresden; this I left there with a young friend and excellent pianist, Klindworth, for him to make a good arrangement of it. This poor man, who was very ill himself for a long time, has only recently sent back the score, with the completed piano arrangement; the latter must now be made in clean copy here, for which the score, owing to the annotations, is necessary to the copyist; I cannot have the score at my disposal again, until after this is finished, and I promise, after Liszt's visit, to send it to you. But as yet, no copy has been made of the 'Walküre', as I only have *one* good copyist here, and he has little time.

Notwithstanding, I am so reluctant to part from my original scores, that for that reason I will not let the 'Walküre' be copied in Dresden; not so much from anxiety of its possible loss, which would indeed be more than serious, as because I must have it at hand in order to go on working. Therefore kindly account for the delay in the receipt of my labours, from the above mentioned circumstances . . .

I, for my part, wish for health chiefly in order to be able to carry out all the projects of which I am still full; unfortunately I am more full of them than I need be, for besides the Nibelungen pieces, I have in addition, a 'Tristan and Isolde' (Love as terrible agony), and a new theme, 'The Victors', *Die Sieger* (supreme redemption, Buddhist legend), which are so suggestive to me that I have to repress them with great pertinacity in favour of the Nibelungen."

On the 22 of September he began the first act of 'Siegfried' in good spirits, and within the next three weeks composed the greater part of the first scene. Liszt finally visited him the middle of October, and to Wagner's joy, remained until November 27. Full of the most pleasant sensations, he then immediately continued his work, and on the 1 of December made the following statement to his friend about it: —

"I must see, tomorrow morning, how I can break the news to Siegfried, of the death of his mother."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, December 6, 1856.

"I am tolerably well. I shall get the first scene¹ done in a few days. Strange to say, the actual essence of my

1) Of 'Siegfried'.

poem is only appearing to me in setting it to music: everywhere mysteries are revealing themselves, which until now remained concealed even from me. Thus everything is much more passionate and constrained. But on the whole, much pertinacity will still be required to complete all this, and you have not put me thoroughly in the humour for it either."

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK, December 22, 1856.

"I cannot attune myself to 'Siegfried' any more, and my musical perception is already roaming far beyond it, to where my frame of mind belongs: to the realm of melancholy. Everything appears to me very insipid and superficial! — You cannot imagine my loneliness at present¹, and my health is also bad and oppressive."

WAGNER to LISZT, January 27, 1857.

"I am now so poorly again that for the past ten days, when I finished the sketch of the first act of 'Siegfried', I literally could not write down one more bar without being driven away from it by the most agonizing headaches. So now I sit down every morning, gaze at the paper, and am finally happy when I get to Walter Scott. The fact is, I have overworked myself again; how then am I to be stimulated? I got on with the 'Rheingold' quite briskly, under the circumstances; the 'Walküre' already caused me great anguish. At present I resemble a piano very much out of tune (as far as my nervous system is concerned), — upon that I am now expected to bring forth 'Siegfried'. All right! With the latter I think the strings will finally snap, and then there will be

1) Wesendonck was in Paris with his family.

an end to it. Well, *we* cannot change it. But it is, after all, a dog's life!"

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK,

Beginning of February, 1857.

'My father's steel should yield to me,
I myself will weld the sword!'

(Des Vaters Stahl fügt sich wohl mir:
Ich selbst schweiße das Schwert!)

"I had proceeded exactly this far, and was just reflecting upon the *motif* which must now characterize the rapidly supervening change, the beginning of the wondrous forge work, when your letter with the confidential news¹, interrupted me."

WAGNER to LISZT, February 8, 1857.

"As soon as I am somewhat better, I hope to orchestrate the first act, while I still remain in my present house. But I can no longer think of the resumption of composition here; I have suffered greatly of late from the musical and unmusical noises of my abode."²

WAGNER to TICHATSCHEK, Zurich, February 9, 1857.

"Today I am despatching you the Manuscript of the piano arrangement of 'Rheingold'. Be so kind as to take as much care of the copy as possible. Shortly I shall also send the last act of the 'Walküre'."

1) Wesendonck's communication about the purchase of the small property for R. Wagner, adjoining his Villa 'on the green hill', near Zurich.

2) There were several pianos in the neighbourhood and a blacksmith opposite, but Wagner made an arrangement with the latter, according to which he was not to hammer in the morning (Wagner's working hours) while he was composing the 'Schmiedelied'. (C. de C. P.)

WAGNER to LISZT, May 8, 1857.

"Soon I hope to be able to resume my long interrupted work again, and now at any rate I shall not leave my pretty sanctum (no matter what the excursion) until Siegfried is in complete order with Brünnhilde. As yet, I have only finished the first act; that, however, is absolutely ready, well done, and has turned out more beautiful than anything. I was astonished myself that I could accomplish it, for ever since our last reunion I have felt myself an atrocious, bungling musician again. However, I have been able, quite gradually, to obtain self-confidence; with a local Opera singer, whom you heard in 'The Jewess', I rehearsed the last great scene from the 'Walküre'; Kirchner accompanied; I sang in tune famously, and this, to you, provoking scene, has completely fulfilled all my expectations. We performed it three times at my house, and now I am quite satisfied. The fact is, that everything in it is so subtle, profound and scarcely perceptible, that it requires the conscious, most delicate and most consummate interpretation in every way, to make it intelligible; if this be successful however, the effect is unquestionable. But, indeed, this sort of thing will naturally border on the verge of extreme dislike, if it do not attain the most consummate, solemn and conscious composure on all sides; one cannot rattle off a thing like that, as we hastily tried to do; with me, at least all capacity and intelligence are then instinctively extinguished; I become absolutely stupid. But now I grasp it all, and if you once hear Siegfried's smelting and forge songs, you will learn something new of me."

WAGNER to KLINDWORTH, Zurich, May 18, 1857.

"I have not had time to make a copy of the first act¹; I am but just commencing it now, and shall get through it very slowly, as I intend shortly to begin the composition of the second act."

WAGNER to LISZT, Zurich, June 28, 1857.

"I shall have no more trouble with Härtels now², as I have at length determined to relinquish the obstinate attempt of completing my Nibelungen. I just accompanied my young Siegfried into the beautiful woodland solitude; I have left him there under a linden tree, and bidden him good-bye with heartfelt tears; — he is better off there, than elsewhere.

If I should ever resume this Work again, then it would either have to be made very easy for me, or I myself should have to be in a position by then to *present* the Work to the world, in the fullest sense of the word. It really in the end but needed these discussions with Härtel — as the first contact with that world which was to make the realization of my undertaking possible — to bring me to my senses, and to make me aware of the immense chimera of the undertaking . . .

I surely trust I may assume that a thoroughly practicable opus — such as 'Tristan' will be — will shortly and swiftly yield me good revenues and keep me flush for some time. Moreover, I intend besides, to do something curious with it. I am thinking, namely, of letting this work be well translated into Italian, in order to offer it, as an Italian opus, for its first representation, to the theatre

1) Of 'Siegfried'.

2) Respecting the purchase of the Nibelungen MSS.

in Rio Janeiro — which will probably perform ‘Tannhäuser’ before then; in any case I shall dedicate it to the Emperor of Brazil, who will shortly receive copies of my last three operas, and from all this, I think enough ought to be realized for me to remain unmolested for some time. Whether my Nibelungen will then appeal to me again, I, of course, cannot foresee: this depends upon moods, over which I have no control. For the present I have restrained myself; I wrenched Siegfried from my heart in the midst of my best mood, and put him under lock and key like one buried alive. There I shall keep him, and no one shall obtain a sight of him, as I must lock him out from myself. Well, perhaps the sleep will do him good, but I can settle nothing as to his awakening. It cost me a hard, sore struggle before I came to this pitch! — Now let us have done with it! — . . .”

WAGNER to LISZT, Venice, December 5, 1858.

“Whether, for instance, I ever produce my Nibelungen or not, is fundamentally of utter indifference to me; nevertheless I shall still finish it, for I do not derive my enthusiasm and strength for such works from hopes, for the realization of which I should stand in need of certain persons. All that the world, or my admirers and devotees — of which I never hear the last — could do for me, would be to cast a serious and sympathetic glance at my whole position, and then endeavour with all their might, to make my truly hard life easy, so that, undisturbed, I might obtain inclination and leisure for work. I want nothing but that. But, for that, a different Being is required from any hitherto known to me.”

With this Being Wagner became acquainted in May,

1864, in the person of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, after he had, in 1859, completed his 'Tristan', published in 1862 the poem of the 'Meistersinger', and made the 'Ring of the Nibelungs' accessible to the public in 1863. In Munich 'Tristan and Isolde' (June 10, 1865) and the 'Meistersinger' (June 21, 1868) were put on the stage for the first time.

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK,

Tribschen, July 13, 1868.

"After the first performance¹, which, through inevitable anxiety about the singers, I had wished to attend quite unseen, watching over it privately, I travelled to my country home, and have been incessantly ill ever since. Still, I expect to recover again, and then to set about the completion of the Nibelungen pieces, with which I still remain where I left them ten years ago."

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK, August 21, 1869.

"I have now been fortunate enough, after such a long and bewildering interruption, to resume the completion of the Nibelungen pieces, and have actually just finished the third act of 'Siegfried'. That I found the ability in me for this very work, has filled me with great confidence as to my further productivity, and consequently with the wish constantly suggested to me, for a quiet old age. I hope, through the resolves which I have taken, to be able to effect the fulfillment of this wish; at all events, for that, complete absence is required from the excitements and annoyances which the performances of my works have hitherto prepared for me."

1) Of the 'Meistersinger'. (C. de C. P.)

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK,

Tribschen, June 5, 1870.

"The 'Götterdämmerung' (Dusk of the Gods) is begun; after some rest and gathering of thoughts, 'Parzival' is to follow, whilst many other things are shaping themselves hopefully within me for further creation."

WAGNER to KLINDWORTH, April 26, 1870.

"I have had to stop the orchestration of the third act of 'Siegfried', for the sake of the composition of the 'Götterdämmerung', because it was quite impossible for me to direct my attention simultaneously to both works. But from the beginning of June I shall allow myself to leave off for a time — after the completion of the whole first act (with Prelude) — and then I shall finish the score of the third act of 'Siegfried' at one stretch."

WAGNER to PUSINELLI¹, Tribschen, January 12, 1870.

"Last summer, on the day (August 25) on which a fine son was born to me most happy mortal, I completed the composition of 'Siegfried', in which I had been interrupted for eleven years. An unprecedented case! No one believed I should ever accomplish it. You must hear this last act, the awakening of Brünnhilde! My finest! And now I have begun the 'Götterdämmerung' too. I must have a great deal of time, for what I am writing down is all so superlative. Nevertheless I shall stick to it now, and then say to myself (no matter how they may denounce it in Munich): 'Well, it is created after all!' And in the future — my boy must see that I am righted. Thus I receive fresh vigour from everything."

1) Ant. Pusinelli, M. D., a friend of Wagner's since 1843, died in 1878.

WAGNER to PRÄGER, Lucerne, November 25, 1870.

"Outwardly I want to achieve one thing more: the performance of my Nibelungen work in the way I have conceived it. It seems as if the whole German war were made merely to assist me to my goal."

WAGNER to OTTO WESENDONCK,

Tribschen, December 4, 1870.

"The piano arrangement of 'Siegfried' will probably be published towards Easter. I expect to have finished the 'Götterdämmerung' next year. To see my great work performed in exact accordance to my will, remains my only aim in my intercourse with the world."

WAGNER's Dedication to KING LUDWIG II.

August 25, 1872.

"Achieved, th' immortal Work!
As in a dream 'twas born,
As my Will did direct,
What sorrowing years did seal
Of the ripening man's soul,
Was driven to the light of day
From the woes of winter's gloom
By the sway of spring and love:
There shall it be seen to shine,
As a proud and kingly pile
Sublime in splendour, to the world!"

Note. According to Glasenapp the authentic dates in the structure of the music to the 'Götterdämmerung' are:

Pencil Sketch.

- Act I begun: January 9, 1870.
concluded: June 5, 1870.
Act II begun: June 24, 1871.
concluded: October 25, 1871.
Act III begun: January 4, 1872.
concluded: April 10, 1872.

Orchestral Sketch.

- Act I begun: Tribschen, January 11, 1870.
concluded: July 2, 1870.
Act II begun: July 5, 1871.
concluded: November 19, 1871.
Act III begun: February 9, 1872.
concluded: July 22, 1872.

Score.

- Act I begun: Bayreuth, May 3, 1873.
concluded: December 24, 1873.
Act II The beginning is undated.
concluded: June 26, 1874.
Act III begun: Wahnfried, June 10, 1874.
concluded: November 21, 1874.

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